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"As for man, his days are like grass . . . but the loving kindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him."
Psalm 103

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The Word Abused ....

"IF WE OR AN ANGEL PREACH ANY OTHER GOSPEL"

It may be daring of us to assert that the very passage that warns against tampering with the gospel is itself abused by some of the very ones who profess to be defenders of the gospel, but this is the judgment that we are forced to make. Perhaps we wax far too bold to suggest that many gospel preachers do not seem to know what the *gospel* is, but when one takes a dose look at the way certain scriptures are handled (or mishandled), it is a reasonable conclusion.

The passage in question is Gal. 1:8-9: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which ye have received, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which ye have received, let him be accursed." The threat to the Galatian churches is clear enough. There was "another gospel" that was undermining all that the apostle had done in their midst, calling them "into the grace of Christ." It was a gospel that destroyed that grace through the introduction of Jewish rites and ceremonies as essential to salvation. The apostle calls if "another gospel" only because its proclaimers, pretending to be true preachers, made that claim for it. But he assured the Galatians that it was not really another gospel, but only a *perverted* one (verse 7).

There is *the* gospel of Christ and only that to Paul. So there is no such thing as "another gospel." What the Judaizers proclaimed was perverted in that it made salvation a matter of law and works rather than faith and grace. And so the apostle says to them: "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?" (3:1-2) Any message that bases justification on anything but the merits of the Lord Jesus is a perversion, and that was the problem in Galatia. Paul concedes that "if a law had been given which could make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by the law." This could never be, so Jesus Christ was given as the sin-bearer to those that believe.

This passage is abused in our day in such a manner that the effect is as much a perversion as it was with the Judaizers in Galatia. One 'is preaching "another gospel," we are told, if he holds some doctrinal error, or what is presumed to be an error, such as maintaining a TV program like Herald of Truth or using an instrument in congregational singing. One is not a true *gospel* preacher if he believes in Sunday Schools or if he uses a plurality of cups at the Supper. Indeed, he comes under the same curse of heaven as would an angel that proclaims a different gospel if he is other than a faithful Church of Christ

minister after the *Gospel Advocate* or Abilene Christian College. If that doesn't out-Judaize the Judaizers of Galatia, it runs them a close second.

This means that our "brothers in error" have the same kind of problem that those in Galatia had, those who were being bewitched by the Judaizers. It is not enough to believe in Jesus as Lord, be baptized into him, and be filled with his Spirit according to the promise of Acts 2:38. That may make you a brother all right, but you are immediately "in error" if you are not *of us* when it comes to classes or cups or music or organization or prophecy and all the rest. One, must believe, repent, be immersed, receive the Spirit *and* be a cappella when it comes to music. Now really, is that any different than it was in Galatia: they too began with faith and the Spirit, but they were told they had to be circumcised.

The *gospel* is thus made to embrace all our deductions, inferences and interpretations that extend throughout the New Covenant scriptures. A brother who visits from the Christian Church is not called on for anything, nor is he even recognized as a preacher of the gospel, all because he is "wrong" on music. And so we judge him to be bringing "another gospel," which makes the music question part of the gospel. So with all these other things. A lot of our people now draw the line on all those who support Herald of Truth or orphanages from their budgets, for this, they tell us, is bringing another gospel. We could laugh at such nonsense as all this and pass it by if it were not for the harm it does to the Body of Christ.

One is left to conclude that such folk do not know what the gospel is. If the gospel includes all these doctrinal deductions, then it follows that no one truly preaches a complete gospel except those in one particular little sect. Not only would true gospel preachers be confined to the Church of Christ, but to only one faction within the group. This is, of course, what the Judaizers were doing in Galatia. Paul was not a true gospel preacher, for he proclaimed only Jesus Christ and him crucified. He said nothing about the requirements of the Jewish law, with its circumcision, sabbaths, holy days and ceremonials. They had begun with faith and baptism, grace and the Holy Spirit. But to satisfy the Judaizers' sectarian demands they had to do more — the way *they* saw it of course. On this Paul could not compromise. Justification is only by Jesus' merit, not by the works of any law.

We can be no less adamant. All these things, whether societies or music or classes or cups, are no part of the gospel. The gospel is what Paul preached in Galatia and everywhere else he went. To those Galatians he said: "before your eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified" (3: 1). That is the gospel, holding up the Christ as the saviour of the world. He also said to them: "In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (3:26-27). That was how Paul preached to them and that is how they became

Christians. The works of the Jewish law, or any other law, has no more merit than whether one has an organ or not, or whether he interprets prophecy as we do or not. ..There is no merit, no Brownie points to be won from heaven, in being "right" about this or that doctrinal interpretation.

This does not mean that doctrine is not important, for it too, when properly interpreted, is the teaching of the Holy Spirit. It is, as Thomas Campbell has well said, important for "the after edification of the church." If a brother is in error on doctrine in any significant way, such as not-yet appreciating the place of personal prayer or assembling with the saints, then of course we are to be concerned and teach him accordingly. But even if he is deficient in such things, he has still believed and obeyed the gospel. Even if a brother is wrong on music or the millennium, he has still obeyed the gospel — *all* the teaching on prayer of the assembly or the Christian virtues are not part of the gospel. They are just that, *teaching*, the *didache*, which any Greek lexicographer distinguishes from the gospel, the *kerugma.*

But one does not have to leave the scriptures themselves to see this. To the Corinthians Paul wrote: "Though you have countless tutors in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (l Cor. 4:15). The word for *tutor,* or *instructor* as in the *King James*, is the word from which we get pedagogue, the same word that is used in Gal. 3:25 where the law is described as a pedagogue or schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. This refers of course to *teaching.* The law taught us many things, bringing us to the Christian age. So Paul is telling the Corinthians that they have countless teachers, but that they have but one father in the gospel. He proclaimed the gospel to them and they obeyed it. That made them his children in the faith. and he their father. He beget them through the gospel. Once made children *by the gospel*, they went on to have any number of teachers in the doctrine that followed.

The apostle would never have said such as that if gospel and doctrine overlapped or meant the same thing. It was *the gospel* that made them children; it was *doctrine* in which they had many instructors. In the light of this it would be folly to say that a "preacher" is begetting or fathering when he is giving a lesson on the beatitudes. He is rather teaching, drawing upon the *didache.* In proclaiming Jesus as the risen Christ and as man's sin-bearer he is preaching the gospel, which, if obeyed, makes people his children in the faith.

This has to mean that if all the *New Testament* is the gospel, which always means our interpretation of what it doesn't say as well as what it does say, then Paul is haywire in drawing any distinction between being a father and a pedagogue. If you hire a tutor to help your child along in school, then he becomes his father as much as yourself! It also has to mean that there is no difference between planting and watering. "I planted," Paul says in 1 Cor. 3:6, "Apollos watered." What is the difference? The same difference that there is in *inducting* one into the army, thus making him a soldier, and then *training* him from the

manual. Our brethren who see everything in the *New Testament* as the gospel should not complain if the teachers at school are still enrolling his children after the term is half over. The gospel enrolls, the *didache* instructs them once they're disciples. It is just that simple.

A lot of effort has been expended to show that what the apostles taught the churches was gospel, but this can be done only by twisting the scriptures. 1 Pet. 1:25 is often referred to, always in the *King James* of course: "This is the word which by the gospel *is* preached unto you." All the improved versions correct this error in translation to read: "This is the gospel which *was* preached to you." Nowhere does any apostle ever preach to a church. The language is rather like this: "as I *teach* everywhere in every church" and "*Teach* and urge these duties. If anyone *teaches* otherwise and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the *teaching* which accords with godliness, he is puffed up."

One preaches the gospel, which is the good news; but he never preaches duties. One preaches to the lost but not to the saved. The scriptures are rigidly consistent in making this distinction. Otherwise it would not use language like: "Every day in the temple and at home they did not cease *teaching* and *preaching* Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42). Why would the Spirit use *both* terms if there is no important difference? It shows that they not only proclaimed Jesus as the Christ, but they also *instructed* the people in reference to its implication.

Acts 20:7 is another passage that is bruised and battered in an effort to find a preacher preaching to the church. The *King James* is again the culprit, having Paul *preach* to the saints gathered there at Troas on the first day of the week. The improved versions all read something like: "Paul *talked* with them." This is the word for sharing or dialoging, but not for preach. Rom. 1:15 is also brought into play, for "I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome," *could*, if viewed superficially, be understood to mean that Paul wanted to go to Rome so that he could preach the gospel to the saints there. But he doesn't say anything like that. The preceding verses show that he wanted to "reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles," and this he always did by proclaiming the gospel to the lost. He was quite clearly talking about the saints when he says in verse 11: "I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine." Since the letter was also intended for the unbelieving Jews in Rome, it is evident that his plans to preach the gospel in Rome would be an effort to win them to the faith.

The nature of the gospel is self-evident if one just stops to think about it. It means *good news* or *glad tidings.* It is both good and news. Once you hear the news it is no longer news, though always good. If one has been evangelized, there is no way for him to keep on being evangelized. True, he may be referred to that news again, or reminded of it, so as to propel him to act in view of its implications. The scriptures refer to the gospel in just such

a way: “Now I remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast — unless you believed in vain” (1 Cor. 15:1-2). He is *reminding* them of what he had preached to them, and he goes on to detail this as the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, which is the heart of the glad tidings. He says in Rom. 15:19: “I have *fully* preached the gospel of Christ.” When he wrote that only a small part of the *New Testament* had been written. If our “all the New Testament is the gospel” brothers had been in Paul’s place, they would have said: *We have preached all the gospel that has been revealed so far*. But Paul said he preached a *full* gospel. There was more of God’s word to be revealed, but no more gospel to be revealed. The gospel was given as a reality in the Person of Jesus Christ before *anything* was written. The apostles went out and told that glad story, that he is the risen Christ, and *that* is the gospel. Out of that story came the church and the teaching (didache) of the apostles, which is to be distinguished from the gospel itself.

We can all surely agree that Peter preached a complete gospel on Pentecost, long before there were any New Covenant scriptures. This is what made believers. They responded to the gospel in faith and obedience. This enrolled them in Christ’s school, as it were, or made disciples of them. Once enrolled, they proceeded to be instructed in the apostles’ doctrine (Acts 2:42). He that contends that what they *continued in* is the same thing that they *began in* ignores a distinction that the Spirit itself makes.

The implications of all this to unity and fellowship are weighty. It means that the gospel itself, not our doctrinal interpretations, is the basis of our being one in Christ and in fellowship with each other. That is, when one believes in Jesus and obeys him in baptism, he is our brother and in the fellowship. The Bible says as much: “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (l Cor. 1:9).2 Thess. 2:14 says, “He called you through our gospel.” When God calls a man through the gospel, he is in the fellowship and he is our brother. This is oneness and this is unity. That fellowship is strengthened and made joyful by doctrine, but it is the gospel and not doctrine that determines the fellowship. True, one can become so grossly immoral, such as through thievery or adultery, that he separates himself from the fellowship to which God has called him, which is of course in violation of the apostles’ doctrine. But this is something entirely different from honest differences in interpreting the doctrine. No man has the right to make his own deductions a test of fellowship. There can be but one condition of fellowship: is the man *in Christ* through faith and baptism, and is he making a sincere effort to live an exemplary life to the glory of Christ.

It is therefore the gospel of Christ that makes man brothers. It is apostolic teaching that strengthens the bonds of brotherhood, educates and edifies, and builds a community of love and compassion. In the gospel itself there is no place for or reason for diversity, for we are dealing with *facts* to be believed and an *act* to be obeyed. In doctrinal matters there

can be and will be diversity of opinion and interpretation. It was so with the apostles themselves. But this is good, for we stretch each other's minds and help each other to grow in knowledge in our mutual search for truth.

But it is imperative that we keep straight the distinctions that the Holy Spirit has made. The gospel makes us one; the doctrine sweetens that oneness. Just as sure as we allow our opinions in reference to doctrine become the test for unity, we are just that sure to create a sect and separate brothers.

"A PECULIAR PEOPLE"

"He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself *a peculiar people,* zealous of good works" (Tit. 2:14).

The misapplication of this verse, along with 1 Pet. 2:9 which is similar to it, belongs to that category of less serious sins against the word, That is, it is not particularly damaging in consequence when people are misled as to its true meaning. But th is series on abusing the scriptures assumes that we are always to be true to the Book and to seek out its real meaning, even if an interpretation may not be an instance of dire consequence — as we believe some cases that we are considering to be. This "peculiar people" thing is more mischievous than felonious, but it is just as well that we set the matter straight, according to our understanding, that is.

The "peculiar people" passages have been made into the Mother Hubbard dress that covers lots of things. If our manners are eccentric or if we are pessimistic when others are optimistic, or *vice versa* … If our attitude toward life is unusual or if our habits are odd … If our worship is different or if our doctrine is rare … If we are not "there" when others are or if we are quite apart from the ongoing of humanity … If we are unusual or different in any way at all, then it all figures, for after all we are not only a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation, but also *a peculiar people,* just like 1 Pet. 2:9 says. It has long been our prooftext for being oddballs! Really, though, we are not all that oddball, whether for good or bad.

One sister was describing her predicament down at work. In sharing with her peers she always seemed to be alone, always out of step with the others, she complained. A brother comforted her with, "After all, Janie, we are *a peculiar people,"* citing one of these passages. Some of the kids in high school were telling of their experiences with their classmates, which made them appear to be distinctly different. If they didn't pet or go to the night clubs or take a try at dope, they were dubbed as squares. Their Sunday School teacher assured them that they were not exactly square, but only *peculiar,* as the Bible says they are to be. One of our ministers was not getting along too well in attending a "denominational" seminary (ours are undenominational, you realize), but he found the proof text he needed in Tit. 2:14. "After all, the Lord called me to be peculiar," he could

say to himself as he continued his confrontations with his fellow seminarians. It never occurred to him that God may also have called them to His service, making them just as peculiar as himself.

The issue here is not whether God's people (not only Church of Christ folk surely) are to be *distinctive* in a pagan and secular world. In calling us to be holy, He called us to be different. Many passages show the uniqueness of the Christian profession, such as "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Ro. 12:2), and "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him" (1 Jn. 2:15). The issue is whether these passages describing us as "a peculiar people" has reference to that. There is a question as to whether we are to teach high school kids not to indulge in the smoke, petting or dope of their peers *because* God has called them to be "peculiar" in the sense of being odd.

We are not the only ones who have used these passages this way. The "plain people" among Quakers, Mennonites and Amish, who are so different that they will not ride in an auto or have plumbing in their homes, find consolation in these verses. After all, if God calls us to be *peculiar,* then let us get with it and really be peculiar. So the Amish wear only homemade clothes, all in muslin and fastened only by hook and eye. It is just as well that we in Churches of Christ forget about being peculiar, for we just aren't all that good at it!

The right interpretation of these passages is mostly a matter of reading them in a version other than the *King James.* The *Revised Standard* renders Titus 2:14 like this: "Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds." For peculiar people it has "a people of his own." The *New English* has "a pure people marked out for his own," while Schonfield, the Jewish scholar renders it "a special people." The meaning is that God has called us to be his own people, His *purchased* people. The English word *peculiar* has changed meaning since the *King James* was made, for the idea then was something like "peculiarly one's own." Your house would be *peculiar* in that it belonged only to you, or your wife was *peculiar,* not because she was an oddball, but because she was only your wife.

So, by implication, these passages do teach the distinctiveness of being a saint, purified by God. We are' to be different because we are His. But that is not the emphasis usually given to the passages. Paul is using the idea of "a purchased people" to show that we are therefore to be a people "zealous for good deeds," not that we are to be different by being odd or "peculiar" as understood in modern parlance.

These *New Testament* references to "peculiar people" are drawn from the *Old Testament,* such as Psa. 135:4: "The Lord has chosen Jacob for himself, Israel for his own possession." The *King James* has "The Lord hath chosen Israel for his peculiar treasure."

The idea goes all the way back to Ex. 1 9:5: “You shall be my own possession among all peoples.” The *King James* has “you shall be a peculiar treasure.”

The idea is simply precious, and it runs all through scripture. We are the Lord’s special treasure, His very own possession, His extra-ordinary people (which is the force of *peri-ousios* in Tit. 2:14). Since we are His in a very special way (the *Old Testament* verses suggest that He has gathered us within His own enclosure, as if fencing us off for Himself), we are to serve Him and glorify Him and be full of good works. When we mean *this* by being “a peculiar people,” then we are really with it, whether oddballs or not. —*the Editor*

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What Kind of a Book is the Bible? ...

TEXTUARY VS. EXPOSITORY TEACHING (OR “PREACHING”)

That title probably doesn’t exactly grab you, and it may even have the threat of boredom about it. I started to call this piece *The “Book, Chapter and Verse” Mentality,* but I feared that might be misunderstood, for I too believe in giving book, chapter and verse in some instances. Yet I am suspicious of *prooftexting* as a reliable method for either study or teaching, and I seriously doubt if the Bible was ever intended to be used in any such way. One is not necessarily doing good teaching when he lines up proof texts like a string of beads, supposing that the more he has the better is his case. Proof texts may well prove points, but whether they really teach the word at a serious level is the question.

If I am to write about expository teaching as over against textuary, then I had best define my terms. Textuary teaching, or *preaching* to use popular pulpit lingo, is based upon some particular biblical text, often apart from its context, with attending embellishments, illustrations, descriptions and commentary. The clergy has christened this with the name *sermon.* Sermons may be expository in nature, true enough, but the expository preacher may ‘have it said of him, “He doesn’t preach; he just stands up there and teaches.”

Expository teaching is to take a portion of scripture, or a subject, and give an exposition or explanation of it in reference to its context and its historical background. The textualist tends to read into the text that which supports his deductions, while the expository teacher allows the scripture to speak for itself, drawing no conclusion except what is allowed by evidence. The expositor is therefore an inductionist rather than a deductionist, which means he moves from particular facts, drawn from scripture, to general conclusions. If he is a good inductionist, he will allow the strength of his

conclusions to be no stronger than what the supporting facts allow. If the facts are uncertain, his conclusions will be uncertain. The deductionist, however, already has his conclusions in hand, and he sets out in search for texts to prove them.

If one has concluded, for instance, that a formal confession of Jesus is a "step" in a five-step plan of salvation, he will have no problem in finding a proof text, such as: "Whoever confesses me before men, I will confess him before my Father who is in heaven" (Mt, 10:32). But an inductionist will not do that. He will ask, *Does the context, along with the whole of scripture, allow such a conclusion?*

If we have some tongue-speakers that we wish to vanquish with the word, we can always do so by quoting 1 Co. 13:8: "As for tongues, they will cease." And everybody knows when that will be because of verse 10: "When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away." Once you *deduce* (not *induce* since it is not *in* the text) that "the perfect" is the New Testament canon, then you have once for all taken care of those wild-eyed charismatics. If a person arrogates to himself certain assumptions to start with, he can make the scriptures teach anything he pleases. If one takes the whole of 1 Cor. 13 and presents a careful exposition as to what is actually in the context, his conclusion will almost certainly be different — at least less dogmatic.

And if you want *your* name for the church Jesus founded through his apostles, you just may find it in one way or another by a careful enough search. If you decide to *count* the prooftexts, you will probably come up with *Church of God*, which is there something like 12 times. If yours is some other name, you may need to look more painstakingly. But if the scriptures are approached inductively (scientifically), the question may well be asked, "For all I know the church has no name at all; I'll draw no conclusion until I have searched all the relevant passages." He may not come up with either *Church of God* or *Church of Christ* as a name at all.

Textuary sermonizing calls for all sorts of unwarranted assumptions. I once heard one of our famous preachers in the Church of Christ base a sermon on *What are you doing here, Elijah?* (1 Kgs, 19:9). Such a question provided him room to ask the business man, *What are you doing in business?*, and so with the salesman, teacher or housewife, *What are you doing wherever you are in life?* If that were not inexcusable enough, he went on to browbeat poor Elijah, first for having "the blues" under the juniper tree and next for being in that cave at Horeb, where he apparently was not supposed to be. The preacher made it clear that God was unhappy with the prophet, making "What are you doing here, Elijah?" something of a severe rebuke. This is typical of what happens in textuary sermonizing. Not only do they not say anything really significant, but they misrepresent what the Bible actually teaches.

The Bible says nothing about Elijah having “the blues” under that tree or that there was anything wrong with the way he felt. He may have been fleeing from that mad Jezebel, but so would most of us, if she had threatened to kill us within 24 hours. Yes, Elijah supposed that all the faithful prophets had been slain, but with good reason. When God finally told him, not under the tree but later in the cave, that He had 7,000 that had not bowed the knee to Baal, it was given as a matter of encouragement and information, not in rebuke. Nor does Paul make it so in Ro. 11:4. Elijah had no way of knowing that God had “kept for himself” that great remnant, which is the point of Paul’s reference to the incident. Neither the Old Testament nor the New makes Elijah out to be a cowering, downcast weakling in the story.

And what was he doing in the cave? It was surely one of the great moments in biblical history. With everything apparently going down the drain with all Jezebel’s devastation and Israel’s idolatry, Elijah went ‘back to Horeb, back to where it all began when the law was given, back to where Moses met with God. He was in that cave because God wanted him there! The context of 1 Kgs. 19 shows how God fed him *twice* the night before by angelic visits, preparing him for the long journey to Horeb, and once in that cave at Horeb, the Lord allowed him to stand on the mount where Moses stood, and to see the divine manifestations that Moses had seen, and finally to hear “the still small voice.” Then God sends him back to anoint Elisha to take his place, while he himself was to be swept away in a whirlwind into heaven. Some rebuke, I’d say!

But that is what textuary preaching does. It robs the people of precious biblical instruction. It is like poor Lot, browbeaten all these years for “pitching his tent toward Sodom,” another one of those texts grievously sermonized. Since the apostle Peter, inspired by the Spirit, calls Lot a righteous man and describes him as “greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the wicked,” I am afraid that we can’t make much of his pitching his tent toward Sodom. After all, he had to pitch it somewhere! I think the preachers ought to layoff poor old Lot, and leave him to be the good man the Bible makes him. But they will point to his selfishness in choosing the better land when he and Abraham separated. But Abraham gave him his choice, and there was nothing wrong in his being a good business man. And if we jump on a man because he domiciles near a wicked city, how about us when we move in right on top of them, in between them, and amidst them?

One of my old Freed-Hardeman teachers delivered one of these textuary sermons in the famous Ryman Auditorium in Nashville before thousands on “The Spirit of Christ,” based on Rom. 8:9: “If a man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” And from there he went everywhere preaching, showing that Jesus was sometimes like a lamb (when personally abused) and other times the roaring “lion of Judah” (when doctrine was involved). That is the spirit or attitude of Christ that we are to have, sometimes that of a lamb, at other times that of a lion.

I breezed out of Freed-Hardeman preaching that sermon, much like the old master himself, and some even dared to say that I did it even better than he did, which probably meant I was more dogmatic. I am now ashamed of treating the Bible in such a way, and I can't understand even now how an older, responsible teacher of the Bible could foul up a passage of scripture so grossly. I recall one brother down in East Texas asking me after I had given that sermon, "Do you suppose that is really what Ro. 8:9 is talking about?", but I didn't have enough sense to profit by the question, even after graduating from Freed-Hardeman! If I had bothered to read Ro. 8 with any care at all, I would have seen that I was missing the point by a country mile.

Sermons may be all right as background sound for one's private meditations in the assembly, or to pay the minister for, but as a means of teaching the scriptures they simply will not do. Not all preachers sermonize in this fashion, thank God, and some of them really teach the people, such as the time allows. But for the most part it would be just as well if we had no more sermonizing. Rather let the saints assemble and read the scriptures to each other, in different versions, and then let them share together in determining its meaning.

My main point in this article, however, is to observe that the Bible is not the kind of literature that lends itself to textuary teaching, if any literature does. When Paul wrote to the Romans and talked about the Holy Spirit, it is best to study what he says to them in *that* book, if we expect to understand it as they understood it. They had no *New Testament* to thumb through here and there, quoting what he had to say to a half-dozen other churches. *First* let's see what idea the Romans had of that subject, limiting ourselves to what *they* had to read. When we do this we are less inclined "to explain away" one part of the Bible with another part, and we do not become dependent on prooftexts. Once we get the perspective in *Romans*, then we can turn elsewhere and do likewise, always making our comparisons responsibly, realizing that the scriptures did not come originally as a book such as we have, but as individual letters, each emerging out of a different circumstance.

Above all, we should give the Bible the chance that it deserves. We should read or quote it clearly and meaningfully, with proper emphasis, which we can do only if we understand it ourselves. One can abuse the word by faulty reading, even when he gets all the words right. For example, if I read Mt. 5:28 this way: "But I say to you that every one who *looks* at a woman to lust after her, has committed adultery with her already *in his heart,"* I leave the impression that the wrong is in the looking and the emphasis is on the heart. Is this not better: "But *I* say unto you (emphasizing Jesus' authority) that every one who looks at a woman *to lust after her* (this is the sin) *has* committed adultery with her *already* in his heart." This emphasis shows that the man *has* actually committed the act *already* in his heart.

This calls for a close study of the word for the purpose of public reading, which is much neglected in our assemblies. The scriptures say much more about reading the word in our assemblies than it does the delivering of sermons, such as Rev. 1:3: “Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear,” and 1 Tim. 4:13: “Until I arrive devote your attention to the public reading of the scriptures, to exhortation, and to teaching.” I know of no scriptural instruction about preaching sermons to the church.

In all this we allow the scriptures to speak to us out of their own context. We do not *read into it* but *out of it.* We saturate our minds with the information it contains; we let our hearts brood upon the facts. We linger with the wording, noting carefully all the facts; we pray that the Spirit will give us understanding. We think for ourselves and draw upon the mutual sharing of other saints more than we depend upon commentaries. There is great power of communication when the community of saints is studying together. When a consensus is reached by a sincere group of saintly students as to the meaning of scriptural language, it is about as dependable as any interpretation.

All this is what we mean by the expository approach, which is a sincere and responsible effort to ascertain *meaning* within the broader contextual and historical framework. The textuary method is to give the Bible a “scissors and glue” treatment, where one creates his own doctrinal “paste up” by snipping a little here and there, prooftexting his way from Dan to Beersheba. —*the Editor*

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Notes from Travels in Europe …

A GRIM NIGHT IN NORTH IRELAND

In spite of my rather extensive travels I have never taken an ocean voyage. Like most travelers, I don’t bother with such close communion with the high seas, choosing to fly over them instead. So the five-hour trip by steamer from Ardrossan, on the west coast of Scotland, to Belfast in North Ireland, which took me across the North Channel of the Irish Sea, is my longest sea voyage. I anticipated it with great delight, but the bitter cold and the high winds made it a disappointing experience. It left me so queasy that I didn’t know whether I was headed for Campbell country or Marlboro country, and I couldn’t have cared less. In such dire moments one wishes he could forget the whole thing and be back home with his loved ones.

But the fair land of the Irish is good for the soul. Once in Belfast I was as good as new, and I found that I still loved the Campbells and Restoration history. My enthusiasm was dampened only by seeing with my own eyes that I was now in a besieged country. British troops were walking the streets with Tommy guns. Some streets and sections of the city were barricaded. I could not enter a hotel, if but to use the telephone (phones are not as accessible in other countries as in our own), without leaving my bag with authorities in an improvised booth and submitting to bodily search. And one is constantly aware that where he is at any moment may be the very place the bomb will explode. I had cause to recall all the warnings I had been given along the way, *Don't go to Ireland!*, and I was ready to concede that it was good advice. I had one advantage, however, in that insofar as tourists were concerned I had it mostly to myself.

In Belfast I was only about 30 miles from Ballymena, the birthplace of Alexander Campbell, and it was my intention to go there and trace out the places referred to in Robert Richardson's description, including the remains of Old Shane's Castle. Alex was born within a mile of those old ruins, but the exact place is not known. I could not do much more than walk about the area and thank God that he *was* born, there or wherever, so I decided because of bus schedules to forego Ballymena so as to have sufficient time for Ahorey, the place the Campbells lived before leaving for America, which I shall tell about in my next installment. In getting to Ahorey I was destined for a grim experience in beleaguered Ulster, which is what this essay is all about. So hang in there with me. If I could take it, you can too.

I shared a seat on a bus out of Belfast with a poor, uneducated Roman Catholic woman who had strong views about what the British call "the Irish problem." There would be no problem, she assured me, if the British would get out of her country and mind their own business. She was embittered over the occupation by British troops, her home being searched time and again, and her beloved land torn by strife and war. It was all England's fault. She spoke scathingly of "the rich Protestants who live in fine homes and take advantage of poor Catholics."

In talking with the British I concluded that they see Ireland as an albatross about their necks, and that nothing would please them more than to excuse themselves from the whole sordid mess. British mothers are especially resentful that their sons have to die as soldiers in Ulster in an inexcusable religious war. In talking with other Irish, especially Protestants, I found that many believe there would be catastrophe if the British troops were withdrawn. The dispute is not easily defined. It is a class struggle between rich and poor, Ulster in the North being the "haves" and Eire in the South being the "have nots." It is also a conflict between deep-seated religious traditions, with prosperous Protestants dominating the North and less prosperous Catholics in the vast majority in the South. And it is a confrontation of ideologies, with Eire wanting a united Ireland completely independent of

England and Ulster insisting that such talk is an empty dream of what never has been and never will be. In the meantime the IRA (Irish Republican Army) and other underground belligerents are continuing with their bombings and killings, with the North catching all the hell. Eire is of course no longer a part of the British Commonwealth, while Ulster is.

I was to spend the night in Armagh and then make my way to Ahorey out in the country the next day. It was a clear winter evening, brisk and lonely, when I stepped off the bus on the mall just outside the main part of the small city, a week before Christmas. I was early enough to get a hotel room, but in the empty streets there was no one to ask. Across the way children and an occasional adult were hurrying into a Baptist Church for a Christmas party. I made my way over, introduced myself, and soon found myself talking to the pastor, a tall, handsome man of middle years named Jim Armstrong. “I am afraid we have no hotels that are still in business; they’ve all been bombed out,” he told me. But to make sure he inquired of some of the others, and they decided there was still one hotel still standing. A young brother was commissioned to direct my way, several squares into the city, helping me with my bag while he was at it. We walked around and in under numerous barricades on the way. The streets were deserted but well-lighted. The ghostlike atmosphere gave me an eerie feeling. I was in a pleasant little city, one whose rich history not only dated back to the boyhood days of Alexander Campbell but on back to old St. Patrick himself, but it behaved more like a scarred but illuminated tomb. Our low voices seemed to echo against the dead silence and the sound of our steps on the cobblestone streets may have reached to the nearby hills.

It was the first time ever that I knocked at the door of a hotel in order to gain entrance, and enter I did once I was OK’d by the native standing at my side. I was pleased to find lots of life on the inside. The Irish like to drink and make merry, and there were two or three such parties going on in the ante rooms of the Charlemont Arms. I presumed that they had all walked, for the streets were as barren of autos as they were of people. The barricades were for that purpose, to keep vehicles out, for the IRA planted bombs in them and parked them in the streets as death traps. Sometimes they kidnap a man’s wife, place a bomb in her car, and compel her husband to deliver the car to a designated spot in a city. Once he does that, he can get his wife back. So I found all the cities of Ulster sealed off, even small villages like Richhill where the Campbells once ran a little school. It is quite an assignment for the British troops.

The lovely, hospitable people at the church invited me to return later in the evening, so once I had dined rather well on typical Irish fare, I did just that, winding my way once more, this time alone, through those quiet corridors of a proud but chastened little city. I stopped off on my way to give greetings to an Evangelical church, which was also frolicking with its kids, but it was unsuccessful. They thought there was something wrong with me to be visiting such a place at such a time, or maybe they supposed I was up to

something. But at the Baptist church Santa Claus was winding up his merry evening, including even me in his handouts, and I was able to visit with some of the townspeople.

One young couple, the man formerly an American, told me that they had grown accustomed to living in peril. "We love our enemies and pray for them, but we know nothing else to do," they told me. It is not unusual for them to be dining at home when they hear another explosion, they said, and virtually everyone in the congregation had relatives or friends who had been killed or injured. They learn to walk with danger, trusting the Lord, and not thinking too much about it.

Pastor Armstrong gave me tender loving care, introducing me to his people as "a believer from America." He kept saying that, "Meet Mr. Garrett, a believer … " Who ever heard of introducing anybody like that, a believer? But I liked it, and it was to take on much more meaning as the evening wore on. I keep thinking of that unique introduction, and I find myself asking, as I mingle among our own people, *How many of them could be introduced as really believers?*

When the pastor learned that I had not yet seen much of Armagh, he resolved to take me for a walk. I was soon to have the feeling of being with Diotrophes, who bore a lantern through the streets of Athens, even in the daylight, or with Jeremiah, who lamented over Jerusalem, or even with Juvenal, whose heart bled for his native Rome. Jim Armstrong is as Irish as Gerald Ford is middle American, and is both dynamic and self-assured, humble and contrite. Armagh is his native home, and he once walked her streets as a policeman. The next hour or so was to be one of the most moving experiences of my life, and the one that stands out above all those of my eventful tour. It was especially meaningful to me since I realized that my host was a native who loved the city and its people and who had walked its streets in its happier days. He has seen it all and has stuck with it through thick and thin. Like Jeremiah, he could testify from experience: "How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow has she become, she that was great among the nations!"

Still the streets were bare as we walked them. Jim pointed to the apartments above the business establishments, and I could see the night sky through their gutted roofs. Ugly bombs had driven scores from their homes in the inner city. Every two or three businesses would be in shambles, a black hole in the wall rather than a salon, a grocery, an apothecary, or whatever it once was. My mind raced back to my own little business that we had back home — all the trouble, worry, money, time, hard work. What if it had all gone up in smoke in a moment's time, and my family along with it? So it was in Armagh. Some destroyed businesses spelled murder as well as monetary loss. "This man was my neighbor," Jim told me as we paused before a mass of wreckage that was once a haberdashery. "He walked down this street one day, into the Catholic section, and didn't come back. Later they found him with a hole in his head." I noticed the man's name, still legible

above the door. “They came back later and bombed the business out from under his widow,” he added.

We paused in front of the fire station, and I could see the bullet holes in the doors and windows, many of them British troops were shot down here, as well as Protestants and Catholics, in a battle in these streets, Jim told me. He pointed to the high roofs with their chimneys. “Sometimes snipers fire from there.” He paused, then added, “People would say we were fools to be in these streets tonight, but *I am not afraid!*” I was made uneasy about what might happen to us, for it was obvious that no one else was taking such a chance, not even the troopers (I was told that they did their watching from hiding in the distance, lest they be sitting ducks for sniper fire). And Jim’s assurance that he was not afraid did not help all that much, for I thought he might be so resigned to it all that he had just as soon go on to be with the Lord as not, and that he didn’t care whom he took with him. Heaven is my home, but I am not homesick just yet. I thought of Ouida and knew she would be terribly worried if she knew where I was, almost as much as I!

I had that feeling, rare in my peaceful world of course, that I was walking through the valley of the shadow of death. It was a grim experience. I felt so deeply for those oppressed people who had to suffer such injustices through no fault of their own, and that it is citizen against citizen, rather than some foreign foe, makes it all the more tragic. But Jim is convinced that the whole thing is Communist inspired, a judgment that was confirmed by other responsible leaders that I talked with. “Look at all this devastation,” he would say, pointing now to an entire corner once housing several businesses. “Who can believe that people would destroy their own town like this?” I felt a tinge of his lost pride when he added, “Mr. Garrett, these were once as lovely little stores as you would find anywhere.” I studied them, but had trouble restoring them in my mind as to what they might once have been, for I saw only burned brick and mangled steel girders, all in a hole in the ground. A German howitzer could not have done a better job.

We stopped in front of still another catastrophe, and Jim explained that one of his parishioners walked into that store a few weeks since and noticed that the sound coming from a stroller parked at the entrance was hardly that of a baby. It was rather the ominous sound of a bomb, ticking off its countdown. She sounded the alarm and the people scurried to safety, only to stand by and witness one more business go up in flames. “Twenty or thirty people would have died right there if that sister had not sounded the alarm,” Jim said with a mixture of disgust and anger. But what can you do when evil people bring their bombs to your door in a baby stroller?

Jim wanted me to see his native Armagh from a hill overlooking the little city, on which stands the great St. Patrick’s Cathedral. As we walked toward the brow, across the dark cemetery and before the cathedral, I asked him if those representing the old Protestant religion were part of the answer to Ireland’s peril. “That is the problem. They are not really

believers. To them it is the gospel plus the Union Jack or it is the gospel plus the Green Sash. It is not Jesus Christ and him crucified." He told of how his people were sending the message of the Cross to Catholics and Protestants alike, and of how in his pulpit the Christ is lifted up as the answer to all their problems. It grieves his soul that many of his own fellow ministers do not even believe in the deity of Christ, while others leave the country discouraged.

"Look at my city, Mr. Garrett, look at it!" he cried to me as we stood on the crest of the hill. It was unbelievable to behold. I thought of those lines in Isaiah: "The daughter of Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a lodge in a cucumber field, like a besieged city." But Jim said it just as well when he added, "It is now a ghost town."

But there is something real about Jim Armstrong that all that darkness cannot apprehend. He really believes the gospel and he trusts in Jesus' power to save. He is not inclined to blame either Catholics or Protestants for the tragedy. "It is the work of evil men who need Jesus," he told me. In his own soul there is that simple trusting faith that God will bless him and his ministry. As we walked through his scarred city in the very presence of death itself, he quoted so beautifully some lines from John Ryland (1777):

Sovereign Ruler of the skies,
Ever gracious, ever wise,
All my times are in Thy hand,

All events at thy command.

His decree, who form'd the earth,
Fix'd my first and second birth;
Parents, native place, and time,

All appointed were by Him.

He that form'd me in the womb,
He shall guide me to the tomb;
All my times shall ever be

Order'd by His wise decree.

As we bade farewell he said, as one last loving gesture, "Our meeting was not simply a coincident!"

All this touched my soft soul very deeply. It is one thing to read a tragic news story or to see its aftereffects on TV, but to move inside it as I did that night was almost too much for me. Back in my hotel room I felt that I was too old to weep and too shaken to pray, but I could not refrain from either. I could only say, "Oh, my God!" to all the darkness, and yet

I could praise His name that in that darkness walked my newly discovered brother, Jim Armstrong, reflecting the light of the risen Christ.

A letter from Jim of recent date says: “We are all well here. Weather is getting spring-like and we are enjoying some sort of ‘truce’ at present. Mysterious killings still go on. We have had about a dozen during the past week, some of them the result of feuds in Republican circles, others by so-called Loyalists. A Communist element is becoming more apparent. I.R.S.P. is the new name they have been using during the past week. It stands for Irish Republican Socialist Party.” And with it some more lines from John Ryland, who must have written so that the likes of Jim Armstrong could. quote him.

Plagues and deaths around me fly;
Till he bids, I cannot die:
Not a single shaft can hit

Till the God of love sees fit.

O Thou Gracious, Wise, and Just!
In Thy hands my life I trust:
Have I something dearer still?

I resign it to Thy will. —*the Editor*

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OFFICE NOTES

Some paperbacks that are speaking to the issues: *The Emerging Church* (Bruce Larson) on where the church is headed for the next decade, 1.25. *Who Moved the Stone* (Frank Morison) started out to be one kind of book, but turned out to be a persuasive argument for the resurrection of Jesus, 2.45. *Christ the Controversialist* (John R. W. Stott), which deals with the basic issue of authentic faith over against sectarianism, Jesus vs. the Pharisees, 2.50.

The Anabaptists are sometimes called “the stepchildren of the Reformation,” and one surely understands better both the Reformation and the Restoration if he knows about these terribly persecuted people. *The Anabaptist Story* will soon be off the press in paperback, written by W. R. Estep of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. We’ll send you one as soon as they arrive for 3.95.

A little volume, written in 1957, on *What Makes America Great?* is well worth reading in these days when our nation's integrity is being questioned. The chapters on what is right with America and why believe in America are good stuff before or after Watergate. We got them on special purchase and will send you one for 1.00 as long as they last.

Also for but 1.00 we will send you *Your Mind Matters* by John R. W. Stott. It shows the place for reason and argument in Christian faith, and yet it relates intellectual activity to life in the Spirit.

For 2.95 we will send *God's City in the Jungle,* the story of how Ticuna Indians in Peru, who had no written language and were ignorant of the outside world, were changed by the gospel of Christ. It is a moving story of a primitive people, wracked by fear, hatred and drunkenness, becoming a new society in God, even if in a jungle.

We have a new supply of *Heaven Help Us* by Carl Ketcherside (2.95) and *Baptism Fulness of the Holy Spirit* by John R. W. Stott (1.25), both of which are very helpful studies on the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer. They go well together, though you may order them separately.

I will be with the Base Line Church of Christ, 749 E. Base Line Rd., Phoenix, Arizona, April 11-13. Bob Cannon at 602-968-4744 can supply further information.

I plan to report at length on some rather unique experiences in recent journeys to El Paso, Texas and Juarez, Mexico, and to New Orleans, La. and Waco and Austin, Texas. In Juarez I assisted Vic Richards in the immersing of 27 Roman Catholics before an audience most of whom had never before witnessed an immersion. In Waco I had the pleasure of sharing with Baylor profs and graduate students, as well as meeting with a group of young, free souls who are a beautiful illustration of the emerging Church of Christ. In New Orleans Ouida and I saw firsthand how a free Church of Christ can really make it in the face of lots of opposition. Rather than yield to sectarian pressure they simply yielded to Jesus, so that now their worst critics are backing off and taking a second look. In Austin I had sessions at the Brentwood Church of Christ with folk of diverse background relative to unity and fellowship, and I addressed the congregation one evening, drawing lessons from the first eight verses of Titus 3. An evening of sharing in the home of Ray Chester, one of the ministers at Brentwood and truly a great spirit among us, was especially delightful.

We will soon be mailing out our bound volume for 1973-74, entitled *The Church of Christ: Yesterday and Today.* The price will be 4.50, or thereabout, for the 400 page double volume. It will have a preface, a table of contents, and a special artistic cover. We have six other bound volumes, dating back to 1966, five of them (single volumes) at 3.50 and one double volume at 4.50.

We have upwards of 80 different issues, loose copies, that are only 20 cents each, or 6 for 1.00. If you will send us 3.00, we will send you a random selection of 18 different issues dating back 17 years, which will give our newer readers a chance to see what we've been up to.

We hope you will be with us for the unity meeting in Bethany, July 3-5; We are making it a family vacation. Room and board for the entire family is reasonable, and it will be the trip of your life. Robert Lohman, Bethany College, Bethany, WV 26032, will provide details.

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

Mike Puckett, an old friend of ours, is now minister of the First Christian Church in Wylie, Texas. ACC trained, he once worked among Churches of Christ. His letterhead reads: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty, in all things, love."

In a recent visit with the Highview Church of Christ in Louisville, where Ed Schreiner has ministered for 28 years, I saw something amazingly unique for one of our churches. A young brother requested, in view of Jas. 5:14, that the elders anoint him with oil and pray that his health might be restored. While he sat on the front seat, three elders laid hands upon him as one of them anointed him with oil (which they had on hand). Each shepherd prayed for his recovery. All this during the main service while some 200 members of the Body looked on. One of the pastors told me afterwards that they had done this numerous times, though this was the first time in the building, the best he recalled. The congregation is not "charismatic" as that term is commonly used.

And I saw still more laying on of hands at the new Southwest Church of Christ in Dallas (see "A Massive Walkout in Dallas" in our December issue). Eight elders were ordained to office after many weeks of intensive study, prayer and fasting. I was pleased to learn that they had followed the procedure suggested by this journal (see "Spirit-Filled Elders" in our November issue). A committee served the congregation in executing the election procedure, with all those being considered staying out of it. Once they were elected, the shepherds-elect spent much time in study and prayer together. The congregation fasted the weekend of the ordination service, and the night before the eight men with their wives spent an entire evening in prayer together. Sitting in a circle, one brother prayed for the one next to him, by name of course, then each of the other six prayed for that brother. They searched their hearts together before the Lord in accepting

the charge of shepherds of God's flock. On that Lord's day morning, one of the election committee gave a charge to the eight men in behalf of the congregation. As he called their names they stepped to the platform one by one, and there they knelt. The committee of brethren then stood before them and layed their hands upon them, as they were prayed for. The ordination officer (who really should have been, in the light of scripture, an evangelist, but I do not know that he was) asked the congregation if they accepted these men as their shepherds and if they would submit to their leadership. They responded in unison, I will. The Supper followed, with half of the new elders presiding over the first part and the other half the second part. Each of them shared briefly with the congregation, with considerable said about commitment and their common tasks. It was a deeply spiritual, moving experience. And what a loving community they are: zealous, joyous, intelligent, vibrant, and *embracing.* We had Mother Pitts with us (my name for Ouida's aged Mother all these 31 years) with all her East Texas main-line Church of Christ ways (which isn't bad!). Her comment afterwards: "That is *some* Church of Christ! And I've never had so much hugging and kissing. Let's come back here often!" What impressed me most was that I had at last seen elders ordained in a Church of Christ. Ours are selected (often *self*-selected by the eldership itself!) but almost never ordained. Neither is this church "charismatic" in *that* sense; but oh, how they are charismatic in the scriptural sense!

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READERS' EXCHANGE

I debated with myself as to whether to renew my subscription, but have decided to do so. I am a diabetic and have cataracts which can't be removed as I am already 87 years young. I use a large glass to do my reading. I read it, then give it to others who read it. -- *Elizabeth Neal, 1409 S. Van Ness Ave., #3, San Francisco, Cal. 94110*

(It is letters like this that should calm the pride of any editor. I can just see this dear old sister with ther reading glass, making her way, intermittently and with difficulty, through the pages of this journal. How that sobers me! It make me want to be sure that it is worth her effort, that there is always something in these columns for the likes of her. I have just now replied to her, assuring her that *next* year's sub would be on the house, and that I thought she'd enjoy the travel letters on Europe especially. By the way, if *she* can renew,

why can't many others who supposedly have the same interest? I am guessing that she'd use that glass a while longer and read a love letter from some of you, if you are of a mind to send one. But make it short, for *Restoration Review* will run 200 pages this year! -- *Ed.*)

I get so much from each issue of the *Review*, and I manage to "bootleg" much of your philosophy and kindness to my brethren. I say "bootleg" as I am still working as an undercover agent. -- *Name withheld, Oklahoma*

There are many pleasant memories of your week here, but one of the most precious things is personal to me. If you remember, you told Jim how to give up smoking. From that day in August until now he hasn't smoked one cigarette, nor has he wanted to! He has been giving a witness ever since by giving God through His Holy Spirit the credit. We all rejoice, for it's like living with a new person. Thank you for helping him see the light. Your trip up here was like a messenger from God. --*Dixie Decker, Lowell, Indiana*

The response to our appeal for help in doubling our readership this year is thus far most gratifying. Already we have cut about 200 new plates and the names are still coming in. This encourages us! We thank you and praise God! If you intended to send us a list but have not, we urge you to do so. And at a price you can afford: 1.00 per name for a year, minimum of five names, no maximum. We do all the mailing, and we do not of course use your name in any way. But we suggest that you avoid people you know to be antagonistic to new ideas. There are too many of the other kind, and we believe, from the way our mail reads, this journal will both inform and encourage such ones. It is common for us to receive a new list from people who were introduced to us by somebody else. Why not try it?

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